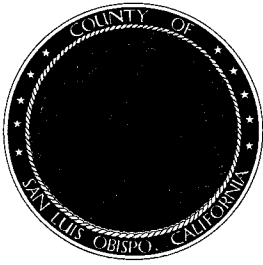


**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA ITEM TRANSMITTAL**

(1) DEPARTMENT Planning and Building		(2) MEETING DATE August 1, 2006		(3) CONTACT/PHONE James Caruso/(805) 781-5702 Jcaruso@co.slo.ca.us	
(4) SUBJECT Submittal of a request for authorization of a General Plan Amendment to revise the Conservation Element					
(5) SUMMARY OF REQUEST The Department requests authorization to begin the process to the revise the Conservation Element of the General Plan.					
(6) RECOMMENDED ACTION Authorize staff to begin work on this General Plan amendment to revise the Conservation Element of the General Plan					
(7) FUNDING SOURCE(S) Dept Budget		(8) CURRENT YEAR COST Up to \$150,000		(9) ANNUAL COST Up to \$150,000	
(10) BUDGETED? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> N/A					
(11) OTHER AGENCY/ADVISORY GROUP INVOLVEMENT (LIST): Public Works Dept, Agricultural Commissioner's Office, APCD and all Community Advisory Groups					
(12) WILL REQUEST REQUIRE ADDITIONAL STAFF? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, How Many? _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Term _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Contract _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Help _____					
(13) SUPERVISOR DISTRICT(S) <input type="checkbox"/> 1st, <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd, <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd, <input type="checkbox"/> 4th, <input type="checkbox"/> 5th, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All			(14) LOCATION MAP <input type="checkbox"/> Attached <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A		(15) Maddy Act Appointments Signed-off by Clerk of the Board
(16) AGENDA PLACEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> Consent <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing (Time Est. _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Board Business (Time Est. 60 mins)			(17) EXECUTED DOCUMENTS <input type="checkbox"/> Resolutions (Orig + 4 copies) <input type="checkbox"/> Contracts (Orig + 4 copies) <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinances (Orig + 4 copies) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A		
(18) NEED EXTRA EXECUTED COPIES? <input type="checkbox"/> Number: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Attached <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A			(19) APPROPRIATION TRANSFER REQUIRED? <input type="checkbox"/> Submitted <input type="checkbox"/> 4/5th's Vote Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A		
(20) OUTLINE AGREEMENT REQUISITION NUMBER (OAR) _____			(21) W-9 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes		(22) Agenda Item History <input type="checkbox"/> N/A    Date: September 13, 2005
(23) ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE REVIEW <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"><i>OK Leslie Bm</i></div>					

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# SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

VICTOR HOLANDA, AICP  
DIRECTOR

**Date:** August 1, 2006

**To:** Board of Supervisors

**From:** James Caruso, Senior Planner

**Via:** Charles Stevenson, AICP, Division Mgr., Long Range Planning <sup>CAS.</sup>

**Subject:** Submittal of a request for authorization of a general plan amendment to revise the Conservation Element

## RECOMMENDATION

Authorize staff to begin work on this General Plan Amendment to revise the Conservation Element of the General Plan.

## DISCUSSION

### Background

Your Board directed the Department during a joint study session with Public Works in 2005, to prepare a budget and work program for the Conservation Element. Your Board also approved an item in the Department's 2006-2007 budget that allows the Department to commence preparation of a revised Conservation Element of the County General Plan. The current Conservation Element is 32 years old having been adopted on November 4, 1974. The Conservation Element is one of seven mandatory elements of the general plan. The mandatory elements are:

- Land Use                      Circulation
- Open Space                 Housing
- Safety                        Noise
- Conservation

The County's General Plan contains all of these required elements plus several optional elements (see also attachment 1):

- Agriculture (part of the Ag/Open Space Element)
- Energy
- Offshore Energy
- Parks and Recreation (in process)

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According to the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research General Plan Guidelines, the Conservation Element,

"....provides direction regarding the consideration, development and utilization of natural resources. Its requirements overlap those of the open space, land use, safety and circulation elements. The conservation element is distinguished by being primarily oriented toward natural resources."

The Guidelines contain important direction for the preparation of a conservation element. For example, the Guidelines state,

"To the extent that they are relevant, the following issues must be addressed with regard to the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, water and its hydraulic force, forests, soils, rivers and other waters, harbors, fisheries, wildlife, minerals and other natural resources.

### **Summary Work Plan**

The Department has prepared a summary work plan to start the plan preparation. The work plan outlines the process to prepare a completed Conservation Element, Final EIR and completion of hearings within three years of today's date.

- Step 1: Initiate Program**
- Step 2: Set up Technical Advisory Program**
- Step 3: Identify Vision, Issues and Opportunities**
- Step 4: Prepare Draft Plan (Public Review)**
- Step 5: EIR Notice of Preparation/Request For Proposals**
- Step 6: Prepare DEIR (Public Review)**
- Step 7: Prepare Final EIR and Response to Comments**
- Step 8: Planning Commission hearings**
- Step 9: Board of Supervisors hearings**

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### **Technical Advisory Program**

The Conservation Element is one of the more technical elements of the General Plan. The Department will develop a Technical Advisory Program that will identify and utilize expert individuals and organizations in the Element's topical areas such as energy conservation, green building, water, air quality, biological, and cultural resources. The Department wishes to use the expertise of these individuals and organizations as a sounding board for policy development.

### **Important Issues**

**Consolidation:** The State General Plan Guidelines contain a section on consolidation of general plan elements. The Guidelines state that consolidation of elements has many advantages including assuring internal consistency, minimizing duplication and results in an easier to read document.

Staff will investigate consolidation of the following elements into the Conservation Element of the General Plan:

Conservation	Open Space
Agriculture	Energy
Off-Shore Energy	

The purpose of the consolidation is to create a more user-friendly general plan. Subjects will be grouped in a more logical, single document rather than spread across several different elements. This will also be an opportunity to reformat the goals and policies in these elements to move toward a single format general plan.

It is expected that existing goals and policies will be moved into the consolidated document. However, some issues may be re-visited. Substantive changes will be subject to public and expert review and comment.

**CAC Involvement:** The work plan allows for several opportunities for community advisory council review. Staff liaisons will bring the information to the CAC's at several points during the process such as at project commencement, Draft Plan review, Notice of Preparation and Draft EIR release.

**Time Schedule:** There has been interest among board members and the public to have this element completed within a timely and specific period of time. Staff proposes a work plan (above) to meet a three year time schedule.

In order to meet this time schedule, the process will have to be streamlined. The most effective methods for streamlining the General Plan update process include allowing specific, short timeframes for review of draft work.

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The second method for streamlining is the CEQA process. The State's General Plan Guidelines state:

"The CEQA process runs concurrently with the development, review and approval of general plan (element) or general plan revision. These parallel processes should be carefully synchronized so that neither time nor work will be wasted through unnecessary delay or duplication. When developing a draft work program for the general plan, staff should lay out the schedule for preparing the EIR. Pay particular attention to the point at which sufficient information will be available to prepare an informative NOP."

Staff will carefully track the progress of the document prior to issuance of the Notice of Preparation of the EIR. As stated in the State Guidelines, a draft plan must be far enough along before the environmental review process can start.

**Public Outreach:** Establishment of a public outreach/review program will be one of the first work items. The Department will utilize a web-based newsletter to keep members of the public informed of the progress of the document. The CAC's and the Planning Commission also will be in the "review loop". A expanded public outreach effort will be established in the first several months of the work program. The Technical Advisory Program will also include outreach to organizations with expertise in the Element's topical areas.

**First Steps:** The new Conservation Element page on the Dept's website is up and running. An RFP for consultant assistance is in preparation and will be released in the following months. Other step 1 activities include establishment of web based newsletter, identification of stakeholders and experts, consolidation research and development of a more detailed schedule.

#### **Other Agency Involvement**

The Public Works Department, the Agricultural Commissioner's Office and the Air Pollution Control District will be part of the Conservation Element effort. Other local, state and federal resource agencies will be consulted as needed. Community advisory groups will be involved in the review of work products.

#### **Financial Considerations**

The approved FY 2006-07 budget for preparing the Conservation Element is \$150,000 for consultant assistance. No additional funding is anticipated at this time.

DE

**Intended Results**

If your Board authorizes this general plan amendment, staff will commence the process to update the Conservation Element immediately.

**Attachments**

1. General Plan Elements (excerpted from Annual Report -April 2006)
2. Proposed Project Time Schedule

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# The County General Plan

**New land uses, development and land divisions** all occur within the framework of policies in the County General Plan and implementing ordinances. The General Plan is the vision of how the County as a community wants to develop and grow. It also is the vision for protecting special places such as the landmark Morros, essential uses such as agriculture, and resources such as air, water, and plant and animal habitats. Currently the County General Plan includes the elements shown in Table 1, which includes brief information about their status and whether they are required or optional.

State law requires that each city and county adopt a general plan "for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning."

**Table 1.  
General Plan Elements**

Element	Required or Optional	Date of Adoption or Last Major Revision	Comment
<b>Land Use</b> Framework for Planning	Required	1993	Framework for Planning is the core document; 5 of 13 area plans have been updated since 1980 as shown below:
Huasna-Lopez		1986	
South County		1994	
San Luis Obispo		1994	
Salinas River		1996	
El Pomar – Estrella		2003	
<b>Local Coastal Plan - Coastal Plan Policies</b>	Required	2004	Land Use Element for the Coastal Zone; implements the Coast Act
<b>Circulation</b>	Required	1986	Integrated with Land Use Element - Updated in the above area plans
<b>Housing</b>	Required	2004	Certified by the State in 2004
<b>Open Space*</b>	Required	1998	Updated as the Agriculture & Open Space Element
<b>Conservation</b>	Required	1974	Includes Historic and Esthetic Elements
<b>Noise</b>	Required	1992	
<b>Safety</b>	Required	1999	
<b>Energy*</b>	Optional	1995	
<b>Offshore Energy*</b>	Optional	1992	
<b>Economic</b>	Optional	1999	
<b>Recreation</b>	Optional	1968	Currently in revision
Note: * = Received outstanding plan award from American Planning Association			

The policies of the General Plan are the basis of most land use decisions for when, where and how development will occur. Various ordinances translate and implement the General Plan into specific requirements and limitations that affect property division and development. The general plan includes several documents, or "elements," that are required to be related and consistent with each other.

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# CONSERVATION ELEMENT UPDATE AND EIR

## PROPOSED PROJECT SCHEDULE

		Months from Start of Project																	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
TASK 1: Initiate																			
Program																			
TASK 2: Set Up Technical																			
Advisory Program																			
TASK 3: Vision, Issues and Opportunities																			
(Public Outreach)																			
TASK 4: Produce Draft																			
Plan																			
TASK 5: Notice of																			
Preparation																			
TASK 6: Prepare Draft																			
EIR																			
TASK 7: Public Comment																			
Period																			
TASK 8: Produce Final																			
EIR																			
TASK 9: Planning Commission																			
Hearings																			
TASK 10: Board of Supervisors																			
Hearings																			

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